

"Progress"
by John Sterling Harris

The old church is down,
And where it stood
Lie scattered chunks of plaster
On dry rough-graded ground
5 Shielded from the rain a hundred years;
The dump trucks hauled away the scraps
Of age-darkened wood with
Many layers of white and ivory paint;
The bricks of the new addition,
10 Only half a century old,
Were carefully scraped of mortar
And stacked in cubical piles—
There is a good demand for antique brick
To build the prosperous houses on the hill;
15 The huge old ceiling beams
And the rough-sawn red pine rafters,
Too big to use, too hard to cut,
Will make fence rails
And cattle shelters somewhere;
20 But the handmade adobe bricks
Of the chapel's yard-thick walls
Have no modern use;
The dozer knocks them down,
Not easily, but still too quickly,
25 To return to the earth they came from.

It was always there,
And the schools and stores came later
Because it was there;
Now the street is naked for its loss.

30 The officials point with pride
To the bright glass replacement up the
street,
Praise the classrooms,
The long carpeted hallways
And the tall aluminum steeple
35 That has no bell;
They walk with relief over the old site
With its fearsome past all hauled away
And talk with the service station man
About his plans.